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Dear Colleagues,

Public health focuses on the effort to create equal life chances for all Rhode Islanders. Our collaborations on many levels are more important than ever to reach these goals.

Since 2005, drug poisoning deaths have killed more Rhode Island adults than motor vehicle accidents, falls, [firearms](#), and fire deaths combined. Reducing and eliminating prescription overdose deaths is a winnable battle in Rhode Island, but is a battle we can only win if we work together.

We've seen the power of public health collaborations work for Rhode Islanders in the recent past: by cutting in more than half the number of teen smokers between 1998 and 2008; by saving more stroke victims than ever before through new EMS Stroke Protocols adopted nine years ago; by the 19.8% decline of newly diagnosed HIV cases since 2007 through community prevention and testing partnerships; by reducing the female breast cancer mortality rate through earlier detection programs, from roughly 38 deaths per 100,000 women in 1987 to less than 22 per 100,000 by 2005.

By early fall, HEALTH will introduce its Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP). All pharmacies will be required to utilize HEALTH's new centralized database to report all Schedule II and III drugs prescribed to Rhode Island residents. This also includes pharmacies outside the state sending or delivering prescriptions to our residents. On one level, the PMP will assist health and social service agencies, public and private, in treating and rehabilitating victims of drug abuse; on another level, we'll be asking all prescribers to consult the PMP before ordering any opioids for any patients.

As we get closer to introducing the PMP, we'll provide you with resources and training you'll need to begin using this powerful new tool most effectively, so please look for more announcements on the [HEALTH website](#) and in HEALTH Connections. By working together, we can involve *all* system participants to achieve goals and make lasting changes across health populations that provide equal life chances for our patients.

Thanks you for being who you are, for doing what you do, and for helping us build a healthcare system that is personal, safe, rational, and just.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Fine", written over a horizontal line.

Michael Fine, M.D.
Director of Health